

A few years later Paul wrote his second group of letters, In 1 Cor.1.7 he describes the Corinthian believers as those who are "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Another period of years rolls by. Paul is now a prisoner in Rome. From the place of his confinement he writes his prison epistles, which are among the choicest possessions of the Christian church. He is still looking for the return of His beloved Lord. He writes to the church at Philippi (Phil.3.20-21), "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself".

According to tradition Paul was released from prison and continued his missionary journeys, going as far west as Spain. Eventually he was again arrested. His execution is approaching. He has finished his course. He has kept the faith. Soon he is to go to be with the Lord. He writes a last group of letters to Timothy and Titus, instructing them how they are to carry on the work that he has begun. Does the personal return of His Lord still bulk large in His message? Listen to his words to Titus: (Titus 2.12-13)-- "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

We might trace in what remains of the writings of the other apostles the important place held in their lives by their hope of the personal return of Christ. It would be interesting to follow this doctrine on through the pages of the history of the church. Always the church has held as a cardinal Christian doctrine, the blessed hope of the personal return of Christ.

What about the time of the return of Christ? This has always been a vexed question. The best answer that can be given to it is the answer which Christ gave to his Apostles, on that memorable ascension day, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power".

Two great mistakes are possible in connection with the time of the Lord's return. Both come under the head of date-setting. The first is to set a time. The second is to set an interval.

At many points in the history of the Christian church groups